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NORTH CHICAGO -- One week after city officials reacted with alarm to word that Gate 4 at Naval Station Great Lakes would remain closed, U.S. Rep. Mark Kirk, R-Highland Park, announced Monday that he has received new assurances from Washington about the gate being reopened.

Kirk said he "raised some Cain" after hearing about the situation, reminding both the Navy and the Department of Defense about past agreements to open the gate for access to and from North Chicago's Sheridan Road commercial district.

"I think within the first hour (after) hearing about this I made about 10 calls, and then it was another 20 or 30 after that," said Kirk, adding that he worked his way up "from deputy assistant secretary of the Navy to assistant secretary of the Navy" before speaking with Secretary of the Navy Donald C. Winter and, eventually, Deputy Secretary of Defense Gordon England.

"We got them to agree with me, (and) they communicated it back down the chain of command," Kirk said. "They agreed with what the senior Navy leaders agreed to years ago."

Gate 4, which sits near Sheridan Road and Martin Luther King Drive, has been closed to vehicles since 1990, prompting a decline in businesses along the city's business strip. In April 2001, base officials announced plans to reopen it, and federal dollars toward a traffic-improvement project started flowing in 2003.

Meanwhile, North Chicago unveiled plans for a 32-acre commercial development, Sheridan Crossings, on the northwest corner of Sheridan and King. To date, the city has invested \$4 million on reconstruction of the Union Pacific Railroad crossing gate at the intersection, while the Navy has committed \$4 million and the U.S. Department of Commerce \$1.5 million toward the effort.

Mayor Leon Rockingham, who was updated on the situation by Kirk early Monday, said the possibility of the gate remaining closed "was a big concern" among Sheridan Crossing investors and contractors.

"I was glad to hear that news from Congressman Kirk. I didn't think they were going to (decide it) this quickly, but I'm glad that they have," said Rockingham, who was informed by city engineering staffers earlier this month that Great Lakes brass was against re-opening the gate.

"My last correspondence before that with the Navy was that it would be open during daylight hours," Rockingham added. "We're still not sure how long it will be open ... I would like to see it open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, but I just want to make sure that gate is open and stays open for many years to come."

Kirk said he thinks the confusion over the last week resulted from a communication gap between Washington and Great Lakes.

"It surprised me a bit, (but) every once in a while in the military, someone doesn't get the word," Kirk said. "So it was unfortunate, but (Washington) directed the Navy to back North Chicago."